



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

Strengthening relationships and encouraging collaboration – that was the theme for this year's Arizona-Mexico Commission (AMC) summer Plenary Session, held in Phoenix this past weekend. AOT lead the tourism committee meetings at the event that was attended by many government officials from both countries, including Governor Janet Napolitano and Sonoran Governor Eduardo Bours.

This conference is such a great opportunity to support partnerships between Arizona and Mexico that can help facilitate cross-border trade and tourism as well as social, cultural and educational exchanges.

The informative two-day event also helps us stay connected to the Mexican tourism community enabling us to gather valuable information on new tourism trends that can affect Arizona's travel industry.

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Save the Date: The 28th Annual Arizona Governor's Conference on Tourism

This year's 28th Annual Arizona Governor's Conference on Tourism is July 9-11 at the Westin La Paloma Resort & Spa in Tucson. The program will be a dynamic mix of fresh industry information and resources that can help you plan for another year of marketing Arizona to audiences around the world. Breakout sessions and speakers will teach you how to take tourism marketing and promotion to a new level. With so many exciting opportunities happening nationally, the Arizona Office of Tourism and its association partners are committed to bringing you the most up-to-date tools available for tourism professionals. For more information and to register for the event, please visit www.aztourismconference.com.

Trippin' with AOT

Arizona Well Featured by International Tour Operators

The Arizona Office of Tourism targets international travelers from the United Kingdom, Canada, Mexico, Japan and Germany (including German-speaking Austria and Switzerland) and has in-market representatives in all countries. Every year the international representatives complete an inventory of all tour operators in their market who offer product in Arizona.

- Arizona is heavily featured in the German speaking market and the current product inventory shows an increase of 12 percent, with 98 tour operators offering the destination. This is an increase from 87 in 2007. Thirty-two percent of the operators featuring Arizona are online operators.
- The number of UK operators offering Arizona product increased by four percent from 101 in 2007 to 105 in 2008. Of this total, 25 are online operators.
- The continuation of direct non-stop air service from Mexico City to Phoenix has had a positive effect on Arizona's coverage in the Mexican market, with an additional six tour operators offering the destination in 2008, bringing the total to 28, an increase of eight operators since 2006.
- France continues to be a growing market for Arizona. Although AOT does not yet have permanent representation in this important European market, our continued marketing efforts and annual sales mission has had a positive effect, with a total of 74 operators featuring Arizona, which is a six percent increase on 2007. Of this total nine are online operators. The total number of operators featuring Arizona has increased by 15 percent from 64 in 2006 to 74 in 2008.
- For the second year the Japanese product inventory will include both the written data and then scanned brochure pages.

The above product inventories are currently available for \$75 each. For more information please contact Loretta Belonio at 602-364-3725 or via e-mail at lbeldonio@azot.gov.

Participate in La Cumbre in 2008

La Cumbre is the premier travel industry conference for the sales and marketing of travel to the United States from Latin America, the Caribbean and Europe. This year La Cumbre will be held September 3-5, 2008 in Miami, Florida. The event features a structured, computer-matched marketplace enabling buyers and suppliers to meet during scheduled appointments.

Approximately 500 buyers and 90 press members from throughout Latin America will attend this event. Barbara Jackson, AOT's Mexico representative will attend on behalf of Arizona.

If you would like to participate in La Cumbre as part of the Arizona Office of Tourism booth please contact Kristy Swanson for more information at kswanson@azot.gov or 602-364-3696. The cost for registration is \$1,000 for DMOs and \$750 for tourism suppliers. Travel expenses and shipping are extra.

Industry News

TIA, AMEX Join on Travel Sustainability Initiative

The Travel Industry Association and American Express are working together to develop the Travel Sustainability Initiative, described as a comprehensive plan designed to make crucial information available and to guide the travel industry in its response to assuring sustainability in travel and tourism. The initiative is designed to educate and build awareness among public and private stakeholders on the subject of travel sustainability, including a review of domestic and international efforts related to travel and climate change and other issues of travel and the environment. Results of the initiative will be disseminated to the industry through a Web site to be launched at TIA's Marketing Outlook Forum in October. Details at 202-408-2183. (*Special to TA*)

U.S. Welcomes First-Ever Chinese Tour Groups to America

The Travel Industry Association and the National Tour Association will host the first group of leisure travelers from China at a reception and Potomac River cruise this evening. The inaugural tour follows the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the U.S. and Chinese governments last December to open the door to Chinese leisure group travel to the U.S. Scheduled to take part in the event are Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez and other officials from the Commerce Department; China National Tourism Administration Chairman Shao Qiwei; and senior officials of TIA and NTA. (*Special to TA*)

Chinese tour groups headed to the U.S. this week under a new agreement that the American travel industry hopes will bring in billions of dollars. An initial group of more than 200 tourists was flying from the cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou for a 12-day visit that will take them to destinations including New York, Washington and Los Angeles. Chinese with visas have long been permitted to travel to the U.S., but the agreement signed last December considerably eased the way by conferring China's "approved destination status" on the country. That allowed Chinese travel agencies to market package tours to American destinations and permitted U.S. destinations to advertise directly to the Chinese people. (*AP; Page 2C, Miami Herald, 6/18*)

Study Shows Rise of Free In-Room Wireless Internet

Wireless Internet access is a near ubiquity at U.S. hotels and fewer properties are charging for the service, according to the American Hotel & Lodging Association's 2008 Lodging Survey, which was released this week. The survey, conducted by Smith Travel Research and based on the responses of more than 10,000 U.S. hotels, found that 91 percent of responding properties now offer wireless Internet access, up from 35 percent in 2004. The survey reported that 16 percent of hotels charge for in-room Internet service, down from 19 percent in 2006 and 22 percent in 2004. For the first time this year, AH&LA also included questions about green initiatives in its survey. Twenty percent of hotels reported that they've incorporated elements of the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design standards in the past 12 months. More

than two-thirds of hotels reported that they use energy-efficient lighting. (www.BusinessTravelNews.com, 6/18)

Study: Domestic Travel to Rise Slightly in 2008

Global Insight, a leading economic and financial research firm, is predicting a slight year-over-year increase in the total number of domestic person-trips in the second quarter of 2008 and a higher spike in international arrivals and visitor spending. The U.S. Travel Insights forecast, done in partnership with D.K. Shifflet & Associates, predicts total U.S. domestic person-trips are expected to reach a seasonally unadjusted 489 million in the second quarter of this year, up from 487 million in the same period last year. Leisure travel is expected to grow by 0.8 percent in the second quarter, while business travel is expected to contract by the same percentage. For the full year 2008, domestic travel is forecast to reach 2,005 million person-trips, a 0.3 percent increase over 2007. (www.ModernAgent.com)

New Trend: Park Models

They may be still relatively unknown to most consumers, but look for a new trend: recreational park trailers or “park” models. What are they? They are small, movable resort cottages designed exclusively for part-time recreational use. Typically upscale in appearance, they often include hardwood floors, bay windows and lofts as well as cherry, oak or maple cabinetry. They also are very affordable, with prices starting in the \$30,000 range. Because park models are technically classified as recreational vehicles, they can be set up on leased or purchased sites in campgrounds and RV parks and used as weekend retreats or seasonal vacation dwellings, which is what’s happening at many RV resorts across the country.

Munds Park near Flagstaff has sold more than 200 park models during the past two years. “We have 41 lots left, but they’re going fast,” said Cindi Eagleton, the park’s manager. Munds Park leases its campsites for \$2,700 per season, which runs from April until November.

Ms Eagleton said the people who purchase park models at Munds Resort are all over the map, demographically. “A lot of them have grandkids and they like that this park is open to kids,” she said. “But we’re also seeing a lot of younger people because it’s affordable. That’s a big change from years past.”

Demand for affordable vacation retreat cottages is so strong that many campgrounds and RV resorts are converting existing campsites for park model use or are adding new sections to accommodate park model owners and renters. (*Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter*)

Gas Prices May Have Hit Plateau for Summer

The price of gasoline set another record Monday, but the average is going up in relatively small increments, signaling either a normal summer plateau or a breather before the run-up resumes. AAA, using daily data from the Oil Price Information Service, reported a U.S. daily average Monday of \$4.08, just up 0.3 of a penny overnight. The U.S. Energy Information Administration reported Monday that the national average price of gasoline was up a modest 4.3 cents in a week. Experts cite falling demand and increasing oil supply for the slowdown. (*Page 1B, USA Today*)